



General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 January 2019

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Fortieth session

25 February–22 March 2019

Agenda items 3 and 5

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Second session of the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law*

Report of the Chair

Summary

In accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 28/14 and 34/41, the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law was held in Geneva on 22 and 23 November 2018 with the theme “Parliaments as promoters of human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. The present report contains a summary of the discussions, conclusions and recommendations of the Forum.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter’s control.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 28/14, the Human Rights Council established the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law “to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to the relationship between these areas” and to “identify and analyse best practices, challenges and opportunities for States in their efforts to secure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. In its resolution 34/41, the Council decided that the theme of the second session of the Forum would be “Parliaments as promoters of human rights, democracy and the rule of law”.
2. The second session of the Forum was held on 22 and 23 November 2018 in Geneva.
3. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 28/14, the President of the Council appointed the Chair of the second session of the Forum – Martin Chungong, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).
4. The annotated provisional agenda¹ of the Forum was prepared under the guidance of the Chair, with inputs from relevant stakeholders.² The present report was prepared by the Chair and contains a summary of the discussions, as well as recommendations.
5. The Forum was attended by representatives of States, national and regional parliaments, parliamentary associations, United Nations specialized agencies, regional and intergovernmental bodies, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations. Over 60 Members of Parliament, from all regions, also attended the Forum.

II. Opening of the Forum

6. In his opening remarks, the Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, François Xavier Ngarambé, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Rwanda, noted that Council resolution 28/14 emphasized the importance of dialogue on issues related to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and recognized the value of sharing best practices, challenges and opportunities for States in their efforts to secure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and the importance of further exploring the interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship between these three areas. He recalled that Council resolution 34/41 emphasized “the importance of effective, transparent and accountable legislative bodies, and their fundamental role in the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. Mr. Ngarambé was pleased to see that many current and former parliamentarians had travelled from across the world to share their expertise. He noted that such participation was in line with resolutions of the Council, and with General Assembly resolution 72/278, which welcomed the inclusion of parliamentarians in national delegations attending major United Nations meetings. He emphasized that strengthening parliaments to allow them to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law should be an essential objective for any democratic society aspiring to accountability, inclusivity, and respect for human rights. He said that the Council prized engagement with parliaments and parliamentarians. He reaffirmed the commitment of the Council to protect the rights and lives of individuals who cooperated with the United Nations and its mechanisms in the field of human rights, and the Council’s condemnation of acts of intimidation or reprisal against such individuals and groups.

7. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, welcomed the Council’s decision to hold the Forum, and the space to discuss and propose ways to increase enjoyment of human rights and build stronger democracies and more resilient rule-of-law systems. She remarked that democracy could not be considered in isolation from the rule of law and human rights and that it needed transparent and

¹ A/HRC/FD/2018/1.

² Submissions received in response to the call for inputs are available at www.ohchr.org/democracyforum.

accountable institutions, including parliaments. The legitimacy of those institutions depended on compliance with the rule of law and respect for human rights. While she acknowledged that democratic practice and the shape of democratic institutions may vary according to context, the core values of equality, justice, human dignity and human rights were universal. These empowering values forming the bedrock of democracy were provided in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the seventieth anniversary of which was in 2018, and in binding core human rights instruments. Those values formed the bedrock of any democracy and empowered everyone. The High Commissioner referred to parliaments as national debating chambers where ideas should be freely expressed. She spoke about the important role of parliaments, including when scrutinizing the executive and providing a check against its power. Parliaments should represent the whole of society, including minorities, and take into account the diverse needs of all. The High Commissioner emphasized the rights of parliamentarians and referred to the more than 500 cases of human rights violations against parliamentarians documented by IPU in 2017. She called for parliaments to protect civic space and noted that governments frequently shut down the space for civic participation, and had used legislative tools to restrict foreign funding of civil society organizations and control their registration or to impose excessive restrictions. She hailed cooperation between parliaments and national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, the media and the judiciary. While encouraging participants to explore how parliaments could rebuild trust in democratic institutions, the High Commissioner called on parliaments to promote respect, dialogue and compromise, leaving no room for discriminatory and xenophobic rhetoric. On migration, she said that parliaments from host and origin countries could cooperate on policy frameworks by addressing the associated human rights and rule-of-law challenges, helping to change the false narrative of hatred and reforming migration governance mechanisms to help migrants contribute to society. She concluded with a plea for parliamentarians to help translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into actionable national policies and legislation.

8. The Chair of the second session of the Forum and Secretary-General of IPU, Martin Chungong, invited participants to reflect on current challenges, including threats to democracy and human rights, the lack of tolerance or sympathy for the “other”, and the spreading of fake news through social media. Grappling with today’s challenges should start with the recognition that democracy was imperfect, unpredictable, and had inherent weaknesses. Democracies were often slow to react and the inclusive and consultative nature of democracy was time-consuming. Nonetheless, Mr. Chungong argued that democracy remained the only viable route for people to come together in freedom around a common cause, the only system of government that allowed for self-correction and accountability, and the only platform for dissenting views to be expressed. He emphasized that parliaments should reflect society with half of parliamentarians being women, and all segments of society being adequately represented. He called on parliamentarians to rely on facts rather than emotions. An ethical political discourse was essential and data should be used responsibly to inform policy and decisions. Referring to hate speech as not only morally but legally reprehensible, he referenced the poisonous and insidious atmosphere in contemporary political debate and urged parliamentarians to refrain from using hate speech and to call out those who relied on it for political mileage. He encouraged parliamentarians to promote unbiased investigative journalism and to consider legislating to define the role of social media platforms in addressing fake news. He said parliaments needed to: protect freedom of expression, including that of parliamentarians, so that they could do their work without fearing reprisals; safeguard the space for political opposition; enable civil society to flourish; and inculcate democratic values such as equality, understanding, tolerance and compromise. Mr. Chungong referred to parliamentarians’ responsibility to ensure that political decision-making was not controlled by economic interest groups. He emphasized that democracy was about obtaining outcomes that promoted equality, respect and human dignity, and protected the planet. He referred to the role of parliaments in addressing violent conflict, and in responding to the challenges posed by social media. He called for parliamentarians to engage in self-reflection and more open conduct in order to become more responsive to people’s needs. He spoke favourably about parliamentary involvement in United Nations human rights mechanisms. Noting the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Mr. Chungong said that the values articulated in the Declaration were enduring and relevant. During the 139th Assembly of

IPU, parliamentarians had reaffirmed their commitment to the Declaration. He concluded by hoping that the Forum would highlight positive examples and experiences of parliamentary engagement on human rights issues. He also hoped that the Forum would improve synergies between parliaments and United Nations human rights mechanisms.

III. Parliaments as key actors for the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

A. Discussions

9. The discussion on agenda item 2 was moderated by Mr. Chungong. The panellists were Murray Hunt, Director, Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, British Institute of International and Comparative Law; Kinley Om, former Member of the National Assembly of Bhutan; Jamila Debbech Ksiksi, Member of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People, in Tunisia; and Nassirou Bako Arifari, Member of the National Assembly of Benin, and member of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The discussions considered challenges parliaments faced in fulfilling their functions and in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Participants also explored the discrimination and structural inequalities affecting the capacity of women and groups that were marginalized or discriminated against to participate in parliamentary work and stand for parliamentary office. Participants reflected on the need for members of parliament to enjoy their human rights as a prerequisite for promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

10. Mr. Hunt referred to the role of parliaments, through the committee system, and plenary debate, in reviewing legislation for compatibility with human rights and the rule of law. Through that review, parliaments could identify positive opportunities to advance the rule of law and implement a State's human rights obligations. He also emphasized the key role of parliaments in preventing violations of human rights and the rule of law by setting the appropriate legal framework and designing the national human rights machinery. He drew on his work as legal adviser to the Joint Committee on Human Rights of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and described examples of the oversight work undertaken by the Committee. He outlined challenges faced by parliaments, including the need for assistance from policy experts and experts in the rule of law, and continuing professional training for parliamentarians. Another challenge was the need to receive sufficient information from government in order to effectively scrutinize legislation. Mr. Hunt also called for human rights mainstreaming in the work of parliaments and said that parliamentary human rights committees should encourage other parliamentary committees to include human rights and rule-of-law issues in their work. Finally, Mr. Hunt said a working global definition of the rule of law would be helpful. He referred to the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission),³ which had developed a practical concept of the rule of law, and to the rule-of-law checklist agreed upon by the 47 member States of the Council of Europe. He argued that the Venice Commission's process should be replicated at the international level to build global consensus on what the rule of law meant, and how it should be implemented.

11. Ms. Om spoke about the different ways in which the National Assembly of Bhutan conducted its oversight work. She described the work of the parliamentary Human Rights Committee in reviewing existing laws and policies relating to human rights, recommending amendments and proposing new legislation. She detailed that committee's visits to places of detention to investigate alleged human rights violations. She described the best practice recommendations made following such visits. That process had led to landmark legislation to ensure compliance with the rule of law and human rights in relation to conditions of detention. Ms. Om argued that a parliamentary committee on human rights was best placed to amend legislation and ensure regard for human rights. She also referred to a project

³ Report on the Rule of Law (CDL-AD(2011)003rev); see [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2016\)007-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2016)007-e).

connecting the parliament to the people through the Internet, a useful development considering the country's challenging physical terrain. She said that lack of resources and lack of consistency were two of the most challenging aspects of parliamentary oversight. The National Assembly of Bhutan had a strategic development plan to carry out staff development needs assessments, collaborate with international parliamentary institutions and work on capacity gaps. Ms. Om referred to the inadequate representation of women in the National Assembly. She said that gender mainstreaming was key not only for advancing gender equality but also for effective oversight, and both men and women parliamentarians bore responsibility. She recalled that effective oversight required a combination of a strong mandate, adequate parliamentary resources and willing and committed parliamentarians. Lack of resources was one of the greatest challenges to effective oversight, as was the need to prioritize constituency issues over national issues in some cases. She concluded with recommendations for improving parliamentary oversight: parliamentary oversight should be a priority, the mandate and capacity for oversight needed to be strengthened, and parliamentarians should build public support for more parliamentary oversight.

12. Ms. Ksiksi referred to the recent debate in the Tunisian Parliament concerning proposed legislation on racial discrimination. She recalled how that legislation had been seen by some as a threat to democracy which could foster discord, but that civil society had pressed on regardless. Ms. Ksiksi said she had worked hard to defend the draft legislation during parliamentary debates, and, on 9 October 2018, the legislation had been adopted. Stressing the representative nature of parliament, Ms. Ksiksi said there needed to be ethnic, religious and gender diversity among members of parliament. She stressed the need for inclusion to ensure that all voices were heard during parliamentary debates and while decisions were being made. She explained how she had been able to convince the other parliamentarians of the relevance of the law on racial discrimination in light of her intersecting identities as a black woman who is Arab, Muslim, Mediterranean and Tunisian. She discussed her work as Chair of the Pan-African Parliament's Women's Caucus and her work to promote the rights of the black population in Tunisia. Ms. Ksiksi spoke about how, as a member of the parliamentary Health Committee, she promoted access to health care and social care. She emphasized that parliamentarians must defend the rights of those they represented, including through the adoption of legal measures to defend vulnerable groups. She spoke about the need to tackle discrimination by speaking out and defending those who were affected. She concluded by recommending the representation of diverse and vulnerable groups in parliament, the involvement of all stakeholders in the promotion of human rights, and the provision of training on human rights for parliamentarians.

13. Mr. Arifari spoke about the work of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. He said that parliamentarians needed to enjoy their own human rights in order to defend the rule of law and human rights for their constituents. In 2017, 507 cases in 41 countries had been examined by the Committee, which was mandated to examine complaints about alleged violations of the human rights of parliamentarians. There was no requirement of exhaustion of domestic remedies to approach the Committee. He noted that the Committee was supported by a technical team, which carried out the preliminary investigations. Questions were sent to the relevant authorities in the parliamentarians' countries. He explained that the Committee worked in private but its decisions were made public and endorsed by IPU as a whole through its Governing Council. The Committee undertook missions of inquiry to relevant countries to defend the rights of parliamentarians, including when parliamentarians were on trial. The Committee followed cases until they were resolved. The Committee's role was not to punish but to engage in a dialogue with a view to satisfactory resolution of the matter in question. Mr. Arifari concluded by referring to cases where parliamentarians who had received support from the Committee had been able to move forward and were serving as prime minister, speaker of parliament, or president, or had been re-elected to parliament.

14. In the ensuing discussions, participants underlined that States should promote the full realization of human rights, in particular the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly, as a prerequisite to the enjoyment of democracy and the rule of law. They also remarked that States should include human rights and citizenship education in the curricula for general and vocational education and training. Participants recalled the important role of parliaments in defending human rights and

underlined parliaments' role in translating international commitments into national law. They encouraged parliaments to be involved in the universal periodic review and other international human rights mechanisms. Participants also acknowledged that parliaments and parliamentary organizations played a critical role in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The power of parliaments to take a preventive and proactive approach to human rights issues was mentioned, as was the need for parliaments to review proposed legislation for compliance with human rights standards, and the need for engagement on human rights issues to be undertaken by all parliamentarians, regardless of their political parties. Participants also discussed the role of ombudspersons in overseeing human rights protection, data protection, and the functioning of courts and public bodies, and in highlighting ambiguities in legislation, examining complaints, and evaluating legislative shortcomings.

15. Speaking about upholding the rights of parliamentarians, and the risks faced by parliamentarians, participants stated that parliamentarians must be free to do their work without, inter alia, threats, harassment and violence. The media and civil society should defend parliamentarians. Other participants recognized that parliamentarians were not above the law. Some participants urged parliaments and governments to consider civil society as a real partner. The need for human rights training of the executive and parliaments was repeatedly emphasized. The provision of resources, information, training and support was highlighted as an essential element to strengthen the capacity of parliaments. Similarly, participants spoke of the need for interparliamentary cooperation in order to share best practices and offer support. Participants spoke about developing knowledge of human rights among all parliamentarians. The role of parliamentarians in performing effective oversight and ensuring good governance, taking into account a human rights-based approach, was underlined. As such, oversight over budgetary allocations was emphasized, as parliamentarians should ensure that government budgetary processes considered human rights, and took a gender-responsive approach.

16. Participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that parliaments were diverse and fully representative, including through addressing the imbalance between male and female parliamentarians, in some cases through the use of quotas. Parliaments should reflect the views of all in society. Gender equality was referred to as key in all governing institutions and parliaments. Participants spoke of the value of establishing a women's parliamentary network for mutual support. The importance of young people serving as parliamentarians was also emphasized.

17. The critical role of parliamentary human rights committees was emphasized. Participants said that parliaments should have committees and subcommittees focusing on human rights, and that parliaments should build a culture of human rights so that it became part of the general parliamentary discourse. Participants considered that national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up were useful to facilitate the implementation of recommendations of international human rights mechanisms.

18. Responding to some of the questions regarding human rights training for parliamentarians, panellists said that all parliaments should provide human rights capacity-building for parliamentarians. They also suggested that parliaments should develop closer links with civil society. Panellists spoke of the importance of having broad political participation and diverse parliaments with parliamentarians coming from across the population that they represented.

B. Recommendations

19. **States should build parliaments' capacity to ensure that legislation complies with international human rights obligations. This includes providing parliamentarians with sufficient information when legislation is being scrutinized, including in the form of human rights and rule-of-law impact assessments when possible.**

20. **States should address the challenges parliaments face in fulfilling their functions, and therefore in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, by making available sufficient human and technical resources and human rights**

training for parliamentarians. Staff with expertise in human rights should be available to support parliamentarians and enable them to systematically identify key questions concerning human rights and the rule of law and raise them with the executive.

21. Parliamentarians should hold the executive to account for the human rights impact of measures, policies and practices. This includes requesting from government clarification on the human rights and rule-of-law impacts of draft legislation, and ensuring that every piece of legislation is assessed for human rights compliance throughout the legislative process.

22. Parliamentarians should play a leading role in the implementation of and follow-up to recommendations made by international human rights mechanisms. They should call for the establishment of a national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up, be involved in the work of such a mechanism, and ensure an integrated approach to the implementation of human rights mechanisms' recommendations, including through the development of national human rights action plans.

23. Parliaments should develop human rights committees, subcommittees and caucuses. A culture of human rights should be built across the parliament and human rights should be made part of mainstream political discourse. Parliamentarians should ensure that budgets are analysed from a human rights standpoint and are inclusive, fair and responsive to the needs of all people.

24. As democratic governance depends on parliament's detailed oversight of government, States should strengthen the parliament's mandate and capacity for oversight, including by providing adequate resources and professional support. Oversight should be a parliamentary priority and be conducted constructively in a systematic, continuous and evidence-based way. Parliamentarians should build public support for more parliamentary oversight. Rules and practices of parliamentary committees should be tailored to support oversight.

25. States should address the discrimination and structural inequalities affecting the capacity of members of marginalized or minority groups to participate in parliamentary work and stand for parliament. They should eliminate all legislative, physical, financial and cultural barriers, and consider introducing temporary special measures, such as quotas, with the aim of increasing participation of these groups so that parliaments can more fully reflect, and represent, the populations they serve.

26. States should address the discrimination and structural inequalities affecting women's participation in politics and parliament. They should consider introducing temporary special measures, such as quotas, with the aim of increasing women's participation and ensuring adequate gender balance.

27. States, the media, civil society and others should defend parliamentarians' enjoyment of their own human rights, support parliamentarians under threat, and protect them from violence, intimidation and reprisals. Parliaments should adopt the necessary legal framework and put in place internal mechanisms to protect their members from reprisals for carrying out their work. Parliaments and their members should promote and engage in interparliamentary cooperation to monitor and advocate for the protection of the rights of parliamentarians, in particular by acting in support of the resolution of cases before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

IV. Parliaments facing current global challenges to human rights, democracy and the rule of law

A. Discussions

28. The discussion on agenda item 3 was moderated by Sandrine Mörch, Member of the National Assembly of France. The panellists were Momodou Malcolm Jallow, Member of the Riksdag of Sweden; Kimberly Stanton, Democratic Staff, Senior Professional Staff at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States Congress; Jean Paul Briere, Member of the Congress of Guatemala; and Kenneth Okoth, Member of the National Assembly of Kenya. The discussions focused on the actions available to parliaments in the light of current global challenges to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, including those affecting democratic institutions and principles, such as undue restrictions on public freedoms, the use of hate speech, attacks against journalists and the rise of populism. The discussions also examined the challenges and opportunities posed by migration, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

29. Mr. Jallow discussed the rise in the use of hate speech and the shrinking space for civil society. He shared his experience, as a parliamentarian of African descent, in regard to the many barriers he had faced in becoming, and remaining, a parliamentarian, including racist attacks and discriminatory attitudes. A victim of hate speech himself, Mr. Jallow described the repeated use of deeply offensive pictures that portrayed him as a slave. Mr. Jallow had taken the person responsible to court six times, which had resulted in jail sentences. Mr. Jallow discussed the different legal approaches to freedom of expression in relation to hate speech in Denmark and in Sweden. Referring to freedom of expression as the bedrock of democratic expression, Mr. Jallow emphasized that it did not include the right to use hate speech. He referred to divisive rhetoric used by legislators in, inter alia, the United States of America and Brazil. He expressed concern about the increase in hate crimes against migrants, attacks on members of marginalized communities, and the rise of neo-Nazis and fascists. Concerning counter-terrorism measures, he emphasized that governments were using the term “black identity extremists” to refer to people who were defending black people from, for example, police violence. That facilitated unfair arrests and demonized those who joined groups such as Black Lives Matter. He remarked that internationally recognized human rights standards must be upheld at all times. He observed that hate speech did not operate in a vacuum and the role of government policies in developing racist discourse needed to be understood. In the context of growing support for far-right political parties, he said that democratic values and access to information must be safeguarded. He concluded with a plea to parliamentarians to use respectful language and uphold the dignity and rights of all. He called for rules of procedure and independent monitoring to sanction parliamentarians who failed to do this.

30. Ms. Stanton provided an overview of the work of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, which was led by two co-Chairs from the main political parties in the United States. She reflected on the rise of populism and noted the divisions that populists caused by valuing certain groups above others. Populists were concerned with the legitimacy of one group, those they invoked as “the people”, leading to devaluing the rights of “the other”. She stated that populism was a means of gaining and holding power that involved privileging some identities (national origin, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual identity, political affiliation) over others. This generated a dynamic in which people who did not share the privileged identities became vulnerable to human rights violations. Ms. Stanton considered what parliamentarians could do. She suggested that parliamentarians should bring a human rights and anti-discrimination lens into their analysis of policies and proposed legislation. If a law or institution persistently disadvantaged a particular group, their design needed to be revisited by the legislature. She encouraged parliamentarians to speak out when marginalized groups became targets and to push back by raising specific cases and defending the norms and values of democracy. She said that the language parliamentarians used should not deepen divisions, parliaments’ internal hiring practices should not discriminate against minority groups, and parliamentary rules of procedure

should facilitate full, fair and informed parliamentary debate. Social divisions produced by the “us/them” tendencies that populists sought to exacerbate should not be reinforced. Ms. Stanton encouraged like-minded parliamentarians to work together to counter populist appeals and defend the human rights of vulnerable populations. She referred to the work of IPU and the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief in that regard, and highlighted the work of the Commission in coordinating joint letters and statements at critical moments. Finally, Ms. Stanton emphasized that certain policy areas merited vigorous and sustained scrutiny by parliamentarians. In that context, she referred to antiterrorism legislation and surveillance technologies and the way in which legitimate national security concerns were used to legitimize policies and practices with discriminatory consequences.

31. Mr. Briere described the causes of migration in Central America from the 1970s onwards. He said that 150,000 Guatemalans left the country every year, and 17 left every hour. He outlined how Guatemalans working in the United States contributed to the Guatemalan economy by sending remittances that constituted 10 per cent of Guatemala’s gross domestic product. Ensuring that the country stopped depending on remittances was a challenge, as was creating opportunities for decent work within Guatemala. Mr. Briere referred to his role as Chair of the Congressional Committee on Migrants. He described the drafting process of Guatemala’s Migration Code, which referred to the human rights of migrants and took a human rights-based approach. He acknowledged the United Nations system’s support during that process. It had taken seven weeks for the Congress of Guatemala to adopt the Code in 2016. One of its provisions had led to the creation of the National Institute of Migration, which looks into different aspects of migration including origin, transit, destination and return. Mr. Briere emphasized that Guatemala was mainly a country of transit and that migrants came through Guatemala on their way to Mexico and the United States. He said that migration was a priority issue for Guatemala. Mindful that children were exposed to particular risks, Mr. Briere outlined measures in place to look after unaccompanied minors, based on the best interests of the child – notably family reunification and non-segregation of family members. He spoke about the work to broaden the consular network to provide temporary shelters for migrants and to help them return to their home countries. He referred to the causes of migration, which included a lack of access to health care, education, security, justice, infrastructure, housing, employment or a decent standard of living. He urged parliamentarians to recognize that these were basic requirements for a reasonable standard of living and were key to the delivery of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

32. Mr. Okoth outlined how the Constitution of Kenya required international treaties to be ratified by Parliament to become Kenyan law. Given the role of Kenya in developing the Sustainable Development Goals, Mr. Okoth said Kenyans should hold the Government accountable for their implementation. He underlined how parliament could adopt national legislation that advanced on the rights set out in international human rights instruments. Referring to international human rights mechanisms, Mr. Okoth said that State reports to, inter alia, the universal periodic review, the Commission on the Status of Women and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights should be tabled for parliamentary review before submission. The recommendations made by international mechanisms should be presented to parliament and parliament should oversee their implementation. Mr. Okoth referred to parliament’s authority to represent the people, legislate, and oversee the executive. He emphasized that the parliamentary committees on budgets, finance and planning were key for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. He described parliamentary caucuses as all-party parliamentary groups that partnered with civil society and academia to draw attention to specific issues, such as human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, and to educate parliamentarians. He emphasized that parliamentarians needed to consider how each piece of legislation would contribute to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals. Mr. Okoth explored the Kenyan system of devolution, whereby 47 county governments handled the provision of health care, local infrastructure, water, roads and schools. He called for awareness of human rights at the county level so that decisions taken by each County Assembly were made with human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals in mind. He closed by arguing that parliamentary committees and caucuses were helpful in developing knowledge and sharing

best practice about the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and entrenching human rights in parliamentary debates and decision-making.

33. Participants discussed how certain kinds of political discourse to obtain electoral benefit may lead to hate crimes and destabilize society. They noted that some so-called liberal democracies were restricting human rights and there was less trust of multilateralism, evidenced by the fact that certain States had opted out of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Participants also shared concerns for the safety of journalists. They acknowledged that freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, was a prerequisite for democratic societies and was essential to the enjoyment of other rights. Participants mentioned that parliamentarians and the press must push back against populists.

34. Participants discussed how parliaments could play a role in promoting human rights when there were impacts beyond national boundaries. They considered how parliaments could reconcile divisions within society when parliamentarians were so divided. They called on parliamentarians to ensure that States abided by international human rights norms and standards. In relation to migration, participants acknowledged that there was often inappropriate provision for migrants and that migrants had much to offer their host countries. Parliaments should promote dialogue on migration and engage with migration as a positive force, making it clear that States could not send migrants back to places where they knew that they would be persecuted.

35. In response to the discussion, panellists noted that parliaments could lead on human rights, especially when the executive was busy with other issues. Parliamentarians were well placed to consistently apply a human rights “test” to policies and legislation. It was acknowledged that legislators must take the lead in addressing human rights challenges, abstain from using hateful and divisive rhetoric, lead by example and build inclusive, respectful and responsible societies.

B. Recommendations

36. Parliamentary rules of procedure should facilitate full, fair and informed parliamentary debate. Parliamentarians should use respectful language and uphold human dignity at all times. Parliaments should not accept hate speech, xenophobia, racism or any other form of intolerance within their debating chambers. Parliaments should have mechanisms to sanction parliamentarians who fail to refrain from such behaviour.

37. Parliamentarians should speak out against hate speech and explain how it corrodes democratic processes. They should counter populist behaviour by ensuring that their own language does not deepen divisions and that they do not discriminate against minority groups, and practise equal opportunity without discrimination. Like-minded parliamentarians should work across national boundaries to counter populist appeals and defend the human rights of vulnerable populations.

38. Parliamentarians should consider policies and proposed legislation from a human rights and anti-discrimination standpoint and ensure that no person or group is disadvantaged by a policy or practice. Parliamentarians should push back against the use of national security concerns to legitimize policies and practices, such as antiterrorism legislation, with discriminatory consequences.

39. Governments and parliaments should promote multilateralism and regional and international interparliamentary cooperation. Parliamentarians should use interparliamentary cooperation mechanisms to work with international counterparts to defend human rights.

40. States should take a human rights-based approach to addressing the issue of migration and should work with States of origin, transit and destination to design policies and practices that place human dignity at the centre. Parliaments must recognize the importance of, and promote an inclusive dialogue on, migration, involving different ministries, local authorities, international organizations and civil

society organizations, and especially migrants. Parliaments should contribute to changing the public perception of migration as a negative phenomenon and highlight the contribution of migrants to society. Parliaments must take measures to eradicate discrimination against migrants, while taking into account a gender perspective and the best interests of the child. Parliaments should help to address the root causes of forced migration.

41. Parliaments should share best practices for involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, they should also draw on the existing international human rights framework to enhance accountability in relation to, and monitoring of, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Parliamentarians should regard oversight of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as their responsibility. Parliamentarians should consider the ways in which proposed legislation would help implement the Sustainable Development Goals. They should raise awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals, their relevance to local needs and their potentially transformative impact.

42. Parliament should discuss and approve national plans and targets under the Sustainable Development Goals, and legislate and provide funding to meet the relevant targets. Parliamentarians should monitor progress and setbacks in relation to these targets and hold government to account for the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

V. Parliaments working with others: is there room for more engagement?

A. Discussions

43. The discussion on agenda item 4 was moderated by Sergio Piazzi, Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. The panellists were Irene Khan, Director-General, International Development Law Organization; Sarah McGrath, Director of International Engagement, Australian Human Rights Commission; Danilo Kalezić, coordinator of the parliamentary programme at the Network for Affirmation of the NGO Sector (MANS), in Montenegro; and Norma Morandini, Director of the Senate Human Rights Observatory, Argentina. The discussions focused on existing practices to make parliaments more transparent, open and accountable, and on how parliaments could better interact with other State institutions. The discussions then turned to the relationship between parliaments and the judiciary, and how those two institutions could complement each other to ensure better protection of human rights and the rule of law, while respecting their respective independence. The discussions examined cooperation between parliaments and national human rights institutions, specifically how national human rights institutions could help ensure that parliaments took into account human rights considerations during the law-making process. The discussions also considered cooperation between civil society organizations, the media and parliaments.

44. Ms. Khan described the relationship between the judiciary and parliament as a complementary one. She discussed the separation of powers and judicial oversight of actions taken by the executive. Referring to judicial independence, Ms. Khan said that it was included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and was a general principle of international law. Parliament should protect the independence of the judiciary, and the judiciary should protect parliament's independence. There were challenges in the relationship between parliament and the judiciary, especially in relation to national security cases. Where parliament had failed to legislate, Ms. Khan described occasions where courts had exercised "judicial activism" and pushed the boundaries of judicial interpretation so as to greatly widen previous legal interpretations. Ms. Khan said the international community could nurture the symbiotic relationship between parliament and the judiciary. She referred to the International Development Law Organization's work in Kenya supporting the constitutional reform process, initially by working with the committee of experts in charge of drafting the

Constitution, and then on activities aimed at enhancing the constitutional implementation process, and also by supporting the Kenyan judiciary to strengthen its capacity to administer and enhance access to justice. She described the International Development Law Organization's work in Kyrgyzstan on projects to bring people closer to the judiciary, the development of institutional safeguards, and constitutional protection of judicial independence. Ms. Khan also referred to recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers in his report relating to the establishment, composition and functions of judicial councils (A/HRC/38/38) and noted that transparency was key. She argued that when parliament supported judicial independence, democracy was strengthened.

45. Ms. McGrath described the Australian Human Rights Commission's work, its relationship with the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, and the "bridging role" that it played between stakeholders. She referred to efforts to improve parliamentary engagement with human rights and the Committee's work in examining legislation for compatibility with human rights. In addition to scrutiny at the federal level, Ms. McGrath said that some states and territories were embedding human rights scrutiny mechanisms. She drew attention to the Belgrade Principles on the relationship between national human rights institutions and parliaments, of 2012, and the Abuja Guidelines, of 2004, which focused on the relationship between Commonwealth national human rights institutions and parliaments. She outlined how national human rights institutions could increase parliamentarians' human rights knowledge, including through involvement in parliamentary scrutiny processes, engagement with parliamentarians, and human rights training. She described the Commission's written submissions to parliamentary committees on human rights matters and said it was often asked to provide oral evidence to parliamentary committees. She concluded by recommending, in relation to parliamentary scrutiny processes, that the committee charged with conducting human rights scrutiny have the necessary resources, knowledge, time and capacity to scrutinize legislation effectively, and that policymakers and public servants have enough human rights expertise. Regarding the role of national human rights institutions, Ms. McGrath recommended that parliaments see them as a key resource, consulting them on the human rights compatibility of proposed laws and using them to help parliamentarians develop skills. Parliamentarians and national human rights institutions should look for ways to collaborate to ensure that the recommendations of the human rights treaty bodies and the universal periodic review received parliamentary consideration. As a national human rights institution's mandate would be set out in a constitutional or legislative text, parliamentarians should ensure that the institution's founding law guaranteed its independence and granted sufficient resources.

46. Mr. Kalezic described the work of the MANS project titled "Improving parliamentary oversight and accountability in Montenegro", funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund. The project aimed to help strengthen the Parliament of Montenegro by entrenching good governance and facilitating greater contact between parliamentarians and people. He referred to the fact that multiparty democracy in Montenegro was only 30 years old, and remarked that the parliamentary procedural laws were inadequate and members of the public were not close to parliamentarians. MANS had compiled an index of parliamentarians' actions during parliamentary plenary sessions. This had been publicized by the media. The result was that some opposition parliamentarians had started to speak up more; the index had made them feel empowered to speak up as the positions adopted by all parliamentarians in Parliament were being monitored. Mr. Kalezic referred to the key work of parliament as being to scrutinize legislation. He said that parliamentarians had not always been effective in serving as a check against the power of the executive and parliamentary recommendations were not always implemented by ministries. MANS had compiled a database of parliamentary recommendations and shown that of 100 recommendations issued during the review period, only 20 had been implemented. Mr. Kalezic described how MANS had pushed for the recommendations to be implemented and a procedure for follow-up had been adopted. He said that more remained to be done to strengthen the relationship between Parliament and the people. He referred to the absence of a parliamentary procedure for citizens to submit comments and described how a final draft of such a procedure had recently been adopted by Parliament. He pointed out that civil society organizations that criticized parliamentarians were often branded as enemies of the

State, although, he argued, without civil society's input and oversight, parliaments could not perform their role effectively.

47. Ms. Morandini offered insights garnered during her career as a journalist and as a deputy and senator. She spoke about the need to combat mutual distrust between the press and politicians. In her recommendations to parliaments, she stated that the best way to gain the confidence of journalists was for parliamentarians to clearly defend freedom of opinion and expression. She also urged parliaments to focus on concrete issues and avoid political propaganda and bureaucratic language, to hold public information hearings, to work with schools and universities and to offer human rights training to journalists. She stated that parliaments must persuade the media and civil society organizations to raise awareness about the importance of parliaments for democracy. She said that parliamentarians needed to learn how to talk about difficult issues and citizens needed to know that decisions taken in parliament affected their lives. She highlighted the importance for public engagement of the freedom of information law recently adopted in Argentina. Turning to the potential for the Internet to provide global connectivity, Ms. Morandini emphasized that there should be no excessive filtering or blocking on Internet service provision and intermediary Internet companies should be committed to transparency and freedom of expression. Ms. Morandini argued that the media's work was based on freedom. Legislators should work openly with the media. In concluding remarks, she reiterated the importance of upholding democracy and building trust between politicians and journalists.

48. Participants discussed the importance of exchanges between national parliamentarians on issues relating to human rights, youth, civil society, climate change and technology. Others referred to Sustainable Development Goal 16 and emphasized that parliaments were part of the rule-of-law system and must be open to all.

49. Participants emphasized that the media and parliament both had a stake in promoting and upholding human rights. They discussed different approaches to laws on foreign funding of civil society organizations and referred to the importance of closer links between parliament and civil society. Noting the challenges facing civil society, they asked how legislators could help civil society engage with parliament. The discussions also touched on the need for human rights defenders to be protected against reprisals.

50. Participants identified questions regarding the relationship between the judiciary and the executive concerning independence in the appointment of judges, who should appoint judges, who can ensure that judges are impartial and fair, and who can remove a judge. During discussions about judiciary accountability, reference was made to the 1985 Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary⁴ and the presence, in many States, of judicial councils that managed the judiciary and dealt with corruption or abuse. Developing the capacity of the judiciary, and ethical codes of conduct for the judiciary, were also considered. Judges and parliamentarians needed to understand their respective weaknesses and strengths and work together. The lack of gender parity in the judiciary was a concern.

51. Participants asked how parliaments could ensure the establishment of national human rights institutions where they had not yet been set up. In reply, a panellist said that States that had national human rights institutions should articulate the benefits and bring this up in regional and bilateral conversations.

B. Recommendations

52. Parliaments and the judiciary should perform their functions with due respect for their respective roles and independence and seek to complement each other to ensure better protection of human rights and the rule of law. Parliaments should take measures to encourage gender parity within the judiciary.

53. States that do not have one should take steps to create a national human rights institution that is in line with the principles relating to the status of national

⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/independencejudiciary.aspx.

institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). Parliaments and national human rights institutions should engage in regular dialogue so that parliamentarians can benefit from the institution's human rights expertise and take greater account of human rights during legislative processes. Parliaments and national human rights institutions should implement the Belgrade Principles on the relationship between national human rights institutions and parliaments, which contain concrete recommendations for strengthening their relationship.

54. Parliaments should view civil society organizations as partners and pay due attention to the issues raised by them. Similarly, civil society should recognize the role of parliaments as the institution that represents the people and should share expertise or concerns with parliament and parliamentarians on issues of pressing social concern. Interventions by civil society organizations should be made in a constructive, responsible and accountable manner.

55. Parliaments should take steps to facilitate dialogue with civil society organizations and enable regular engagement with parliamentarians, including by information sharing, rather than restricting such interactions. Parliaments should also put in place the necessary legal framework to enable civil society to do its work without fear of reprisals.

56. Parliaments should prioritize transparency and accountability, and combat corruption, to remain legitimate in the eyes of the public. Voting records should be made available for public scrutiny, preferably in electronic form.

57. Parliamentarians should promote constructive and open engagement with the media to reach the public more effectively, gain their trust, and increase accountability. The media should contribute to fostering dialogue between parliamentarians and civil society, including by providing opportunities for people to express their views and exert influence over decision makers. The media should focus on substantive issues rather than adopt a sensationalist approach.

VI. Enhancing the involvement of parliaments in international human rights mechanisms

A. Discussions

58. The discussion on agenda item 5 was moderated by Mr. Hunt. The panellists were Sophie Kiladze, Member of the Parliament of Georgia; Nicole Ameline, member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women-IPU Working Group; Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon; and Stefan Krauss, Acting Head of the Human Rights Action Unit, Directorate for Democracy Support, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament. The discussions focused on measures to ensure structured and regular participation by national and regional parliaments in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the universal periodic review. Participants also identified measures to increase collaboration between parliaments and human rights treaty bodies for the implementation of recommendations. Participants examined the human rights work of international and regional parliamentary organizations, including successful initiatives taken to strengthen the attention paid to human rights issues.

59. Ms. Kiladze described the work of the Public Defender (Ombudsman), which oversaw human rights in Georgia, advised the Government on human rights issues and analysed laws, policies and practices for compliance with international standards. The Public Defender reported annually to Parliament which, in turn, after receiving the reports, made recommendations to the executive and the judiciary. Around 75 per cent of recommendations had been accepted. Ms. Kiladze described the work of the parliamentary Human Rights Committee, which monitored the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and recommendations of United Nations human rights

mechanisms. About 50 per cent of the universal periodic review recommendations made to Georgia involved legislative amendments, or the adoption of new legislation. The Committee had recently started receiving shadow reports from civil society and Ms. Kiladze said that it took their recommendations seriously. She emphasized the importance of parliamentarians being involved in the Human Rights Council's work and said that this deserved attention and resources. She recommended that States facilitate the involvement of parliaments in the universal periodic review, in preparations, as part of the national delegation to the universal periodic review and in overseeing the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Government. Such cooperation would be enhanced by having a parliamentary human rights committee.

60. Ms. Ameline introduced the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women-IPU Working Group. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was the only human rights treaty body to have a policy on cooperation with parliaments and IPU. She remarked that connections between parliaments and the human rights treaty bodies were essential. Parliamentarians should be included in meetings with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and be involved in implementing the Committee's recommendations. She highlighted parliament's role in transposing international human rights treaties into domestic law. She said that parliaments should work to withdraw reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She also said that parliaments must be representative of the people they served. Referring to the global average of women in parliament, 23 per cent, she argued that this was insufficient and the debate on gender parity had not gone far enough. Women must participate in politics and there should be 50 per cent female parliamentarians, with women fully involved in decision-making processes. She referred to Sustainable Development Goal 5, saying that States had recognized the role of gender equality in achieving sustainable development. She noted that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women worked with States to make sure that the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals were implemented together. She also called for Sustainable Development Goals implementation programmes to have a gender perspective. She called for parliaments to show solidarity through regional cooperation, be open to civil society, and empower women.

61. Ms. Lifaka detailed the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's work to develop the ability of parliamentarians to promote and protect human rights, which had resulted in the Mahé Declaration, for Africa, of 2014; the Pipitea Declaration, for the Pacific, of 2015; and the Kotte Declaration, for Asia, of 2016. These were a pioneering attempt by parliamentarians to ensure that parliaments promoted and protected human rights, including by supporting the implementation of United Nations human rights mechanisms' recommendations and scrutinizing government policy and practice for compliance with States' international human rights obligations. Ms. Lifaka regarded the declarations as contributions to potential international principles or guidelines on the role of parliaments in the promotion and protection of human rights. She referred to the establishment of regional Commonwealth parliamentary human rights groups to turn the declarations into reality, such as the Commonwealth Africa Parliamentary Human Rights Group. She also described how, pursuant to the Mahé Declaration, a Kenyan parliamentarian had established the Kenya Parliamentary Human Rights Association, a cross-party human rights caucus. Ms. Lifaka said that approximately 28 per cent of parliaments in Commonwealth countries had established human rights committees. In some Commonwealth countries, parliaments endeavoured to ensure that every parliamentary committee considered human rights. Ms. Lifaka noted that the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Network had been established in 2017 and advocated for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in politics and parliaments. She referred to the founding of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians in 1989, which was aimed at increasing the number of female elected representatives in parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth and ensuring that issues affecting women were included in parliamentary debate. It provided capacity-building for women parliamentarians and improved the ability of all parliamentarians to include a gender-based perspective in their legislative, oversight and representation functions, thereby helping parliaments to become more gender-sensitive. Ms. Lifaka underlined parliamentarians' responsibility to keep

human rights at the forefront of their work, including by ensuring that States implemented international human rights treaties.

62. Mr. Krauss referred to mainstreaming human rights in the external policies of the European Union in order to promote the universality and indivisibility of human rights. The European Parliament had recently legislated on data protection, access to justice, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and initiatives to combat inequality, discrimination and hate speech. He acknowledged that heterogeneity of human rights standards between States, as well as backsliding in recent years, were of concern and, consequently, cooperation between the European Parliament and the parliaments of European Union members needed to be reinforced. Mr. Krauss described how the European Parliament oversaw the human rights dimension of the European Union's external policies. The European Parliament's practice of inviting special procedures of the Human Rights Council to address it should be replicated by national parliaments. Special procedures' recommendations were included in the European Parliament's resolutions. When Members of the European Parliament travelled abroad, the European Parliament included special procedures' findings in briefings, in addition to information about the ratification and implementation of human rights treaties. The European Parliament focused on promoting democracy and human rights capacity-building programmes for national parliaments. In interparliamentary meetings, Members of the European Parliament encouraged their counterparts to access the United Nations human rights mechanisms, strengthen cooperation between such mechanisms and regional ones, and develop human rights committees. Mr. Krauss emphasized that all actors, including civil society, should be involved in drafting and implementing legislation. Mr. Krauss mentioned the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, and ongoing work with the laureates through the Sakharov Prize Network and the Sakharov Fellowship for Human Rights Defenders. The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was awarded annually by the European Parliament to individuals who had made an exceptional contribution to promoting human rights.

63. Participants agreed that democracy, human rights and the rule of law were inextricably linked to each other and were connected to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. They called for human rights to be studied in schools in order to build a culture of human rights. They discussed the value of youth parliaments in preparing young people to be parliamentarians. Participants referred to the challenge to democracy posed by far-right political parties. The discussions suggested that mainstream politicians needed to address issues of concern for those who felt excluded by globalization, refer to States' international law obligations set out in human rights treaties, and depoliticize discussions. Some argued that constitutional courts should ban parties that went against the constitutional order.

64. Temporary special measures, for example quotas, were discussed as a means to move ahead faster towards gender parity, respond to the wishes of civil society, and contribute to evolving ways of thinking. The important role of parliaments in relation to protecting the rule of law was stressed. The non-implementation of court judgments and decisions of the human rights treaty bodies was considered as bringing the rule of law into disrepute; their implementation should be a legal and political issue requiring parliamentary scrutiny. The establishment of national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up was discussed.

65. Participants welcomed the Draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights (A/HRC/38/25, annex I), which provided guidance for the setting up of parliamentary human rights committees and for ensuring their effective functioning. The principles were based on a study of best practices in parliaments, which had been a parliamentarian-driven exercise. Parliamentarians should own the next steps of the process, including the adoption of such draft principles. Participants encouraged States to support the draft principles, which reflected best practices from parliaments around the world. They called for parliamentarians to provide input to States' reports to the universal periodic review, including through human rights committees.

B. Recommendations

66. States should implement the recommendations included in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review (A/HRC/38/25). In particular, they should ensure regular participation by parliaments in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the universal periodic review and special procedures. States should also consider adopting new, innovative ways to facilitate such participation. Parliaments should be invited to express their views on the government's position on recommendations received.

67. Parliaments should facilitate legislative changes needed to enable States to implement recommendations of the universal periodic review that they have accepted.

68. Parliamentarians should further discuss the Draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights (A/HRC/38/25, annex I), including next steps on how they are taken forward.

69. Parliaments should increase collaboration with human rights treaty bodies, including for the preparation of State reports and during discussion with the treaty bodies, and oversee the implementation of recommendations. Treaty bodies are invited to draw inspiration from the systematic engagement of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and to develop similar methods of cooperation.

70. States should support the human rights work of international and regional parliamentary organizations and replicate at the national level successful initiatives taken by these organizations to strengthen attention to human rights issues.

71. States and civil society organizations should invest in education, training and awareness-raising for parliamentarians about the work of the United Nations human rights system, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms and the human rights treaty bodies.

VII. Conclusions

72. In his concluding remarks, the Chair, Mr. Chungong, expressed appreciation to all participants for their engagement and commitment, and thanked all panellists and moderators for their contributions and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the organization of the Forum. He referred to the collaboration between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in preparing the Forum as a fine example of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

73. Mr. Chungong summarized the main issues discussed during the Forum. He expressed satisfaction at the unanimous opinion on the importance of parliament in promoting and defending human rights, and the value of parliamentary committees, subcommittees and caucuses on human rights. He referred to parliament's power to enact legislation, to take a preventive approach towards human rights protection, and to review legislation for compliance with human rights standards. A culture of human rights should be built across parliaments to mainstream human rights in parliamentary work, including through budget oversight and allocation work. Human rights implementation should be a multiparty endeavour. Mr. Chungong underlined the need for interparliamentary cooperation so that parliaments could be mutually reinforcing and share best practices. He reiterated that parliaments should be representative and reflect all views. Gender equality and the representation of minority groups in parliament and governing institutions was key. Mr. Chungong referred to the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and said the media and civil society should defend

parliamentarians as guardians of human rights. He referred to the serious problem of hate speech and underscored that no parliamentarian should face attacks for doing his or her job. He emphasized, though, that parliamentarians were not above the law. Mr. Chungong urged parliamentarians to help implement the Sustainable Development Goals, to combat attacks on democracy by populist leaders and to address migration-related issues using a human rights-based approach. He underscored the importance of the independence of the judiciary and highlighted how national human rights institutions, civil society and the media could strengthen the role of parliaments as promoters of human rights.

74. Summarizing the challenges facing parliaments, Mr. Chungong referred to the need for additional resources, information, training and support in order to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to act as promoters of human rights. Parliaments needed assistance from policy experts and rule of law experts, continuing professional training, and confidence-building measures. Referring to the report entitled “Contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review” (A/HRC/38/25), and the Draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights (*ibid.*, annex I), Mr. Chungong encouraged parliamentary involvement in the universal periodic review and other United Nations human rights mechanisms. Parliamentarians needed to ensure that United Nations human rights mechanisms’ recommendations were implemented, particularly as implementation often required legislative changes. He referred to the role played by international and regional parliamentary organizations in strengthening the attention paid by parliaments to human rights issues. Mr. Chungong called on all present to examine the recommendations in the present report and consider how they could be implemented. He was heartened by the holistic and comprehensive approach to human rights displayed during the Forum and reiterated the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s commitment to mobilize support for the implementation of the recommendations made during the Forum.
